

Two Tomatoes One Onion & an Olive

Photography: from Attention to Intention

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“The Cost of Fame”



“The Cost of Fame”	6
Introduction	11
From Attention to intentionality	13
“In Memory Of”	30
Realizing Realism	41
“Rue Van Gogh / To Vincent.”	66
Forgetting and Remembering	75
“The 73”	80
From Breath to Breath	87
“Formalistic-Game” / ‘Patarei Prison’, Estonia.	102
It’s time to make some conclusions	107
Selected Works	114
My Works	131
Bibliography	133
Illustrations	135
“Olivia” by Ian Falconer	137

Introduction

The invention of photography brought into our world a new kind of representation, constructed upon a mechanical eye, which coordinates sun light onto a specific sensitive surface that capture it and produces images. The main character of this new technology dealt with the problematic notion about the place of the 'author' and the meaning (way of reading) of these hybrid technical images.

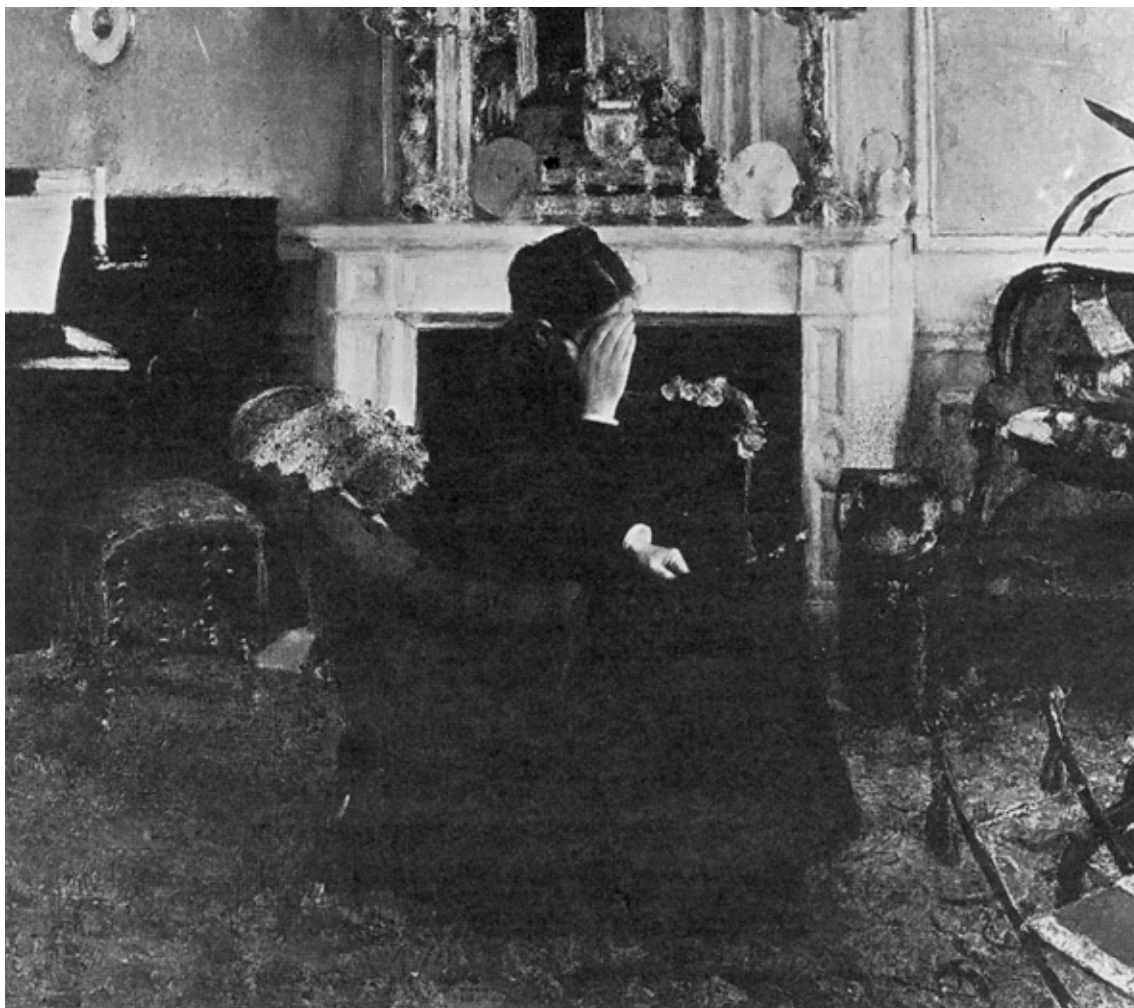
In this thesis I would like to explore the connection between the photographic practice and human perception. I will contemplate upon it through the term 'Attention', which is a fundamental factor in the creation of human experience. From 'Attention' I will go to related terms such as distraction, surprise and intention which became important since the realization of 'Attention' as a fundamental factor in human capacities.

I will put an emphasis on the importance of technology when it comes to the understanding of the photographic image and practice. We are dealing here with images, and as Flusser puts it brightly, the Technical Image (a photograph) is an image and not a window. The camera does not open a wide window towards 'The Real' which the viewer is invited to look through. The special combination between the apparatus and its operator/ the photographer, creates a sphere where the world 'out there' turns into a collection of symbols which as in traditional images construct its meaning. In other words the mechanic action of taking a picture creates a subjective point of view rather than an objective one.

By re-thinking about the technical qualities of this medium we are able to define more clearly the specific qualities of the medium, and therefore develop our skills both in using and thinking about photography, as photographers as well as viewers.

In the next chapters I will demonstrate this special photographic relation towards 'The Real'. As it can be realized throughout the works of important photographers and myself.

From Attention to Intentionality



"Listening To Schumann"

1883

Fernand Kbnopff

In this chapter I would like to discuss the importance of Attention in the Modern World and its applications in the photographic practice. I will go through important developments in philosophy and psychology during the 19th century. I will put an emphasize on the development of the camera, photography and how it is connected to basic questions regarding the notion of 'Attention'. I would like to discuss photography as an important tool that promotes and creates knowledge and constructs what can be called 'the possibility of being attentive'.

What is 'Paying attention'? What is the role of paying attention in the photographic practice? Why did the invention of photography emerge in the middle of the 19th century?

All of the above and more will be the core interest of this chapter.

The importance of 'Attention', as a problem and as a central idea through which one can articulate and learn about human perception, rose drastically during the 19th century. It was part of a larger change in perception that suddenly put the subjective experience in the center of the world.

These changes brought up the idea of subjective vision and the notion that our perceptual and sensorial experience depends less on the nature of external stimulus than on the composition and functioning of our sensorial apparatus that put the emphasis back onto the 'Autonomous Vision'. The eye and the personal experience as a fundamental factor that creates knowledge and constructs consciousness.

One of the consequences of this shift was the notion that the functioning of vision became dependent on psychological wholeness of the private observer, which means that sight, vision and perception were unreliable and even arbitrary. It was well investigated and proven through many fields that vision and all other senses can no longer claim for objectivity or certainty. From this point the problem of Attention became the main subject that needed to be comprehended. (Crary, 2001)

The rapid industrial development lead to the Modern Revolution and the problem of Attention emerged as a major issue. The place and the importance of modern city and industrialization pact, increasingly saturated the sensorial input forced on the individual and in turn, created inattention that became a dangerous problem. Marx discussed this issue in 1840 and stressed, what factory managers understood, as well that "the extent of vigilance and attention on the part of the workman was hardly capable of being increased"¹ and that shortening the working day, and thus exhausting less the worker's attentive resources, what result in an increase in productivity.

¹ Marx K. C. (1967). Capital.vol.1, trans. Samuel & Edward Aveling, New York: International. Pp.410-412. In Crary (2001). P.14.

Such changes that Modernity introduced made 'Attention' and 'Distraction' main issues that needed to be adjusted in order to maximize human production. Attention became a thing that must be disciplined and at the same time it has been argued that this mysterious human capacity of attentiveness can hardly be controlled by such disciplinary imperatives. Kant's model of synthesis as a fundamental act in the construction of knowledge and in human capability to manage within the fragmentation and automation of the cognitive field, became especially acute in the second half of the nineteenth century. Kant argued that all possible perception could occur, only when original synthesis takes place and stand above any experience based on empirical sense, such as vision; It takes another elementary factor such as the act of paying attention, to guide the endless data based on sensations into the construction of a constructive model of synthesis. (Kant, 1965)

The problem of 'reality maintenance' became nothing but the psychological capacity for synthesis and associations; a malfunction for the capacity for synthesis often described as 'disassociation' became linked to psychosis and other mental pathologies; The Swiss psychiatrist Eugen Bleuler who was credited with introducing the term 'Schizophrenia' noted that in a Schizophrenic episode "The selectivity which normal attention ordinarily exercises ... can be reduced to zero so that almost everything is recorded"²

In the British Journal of Medical Psychology from 1961, the cultural and social disruptions inherent in schizophrenia have been outlined thus: "By the process of attention we thus break down and effectively categorize both the information reaching us from the environment, and that which is internally in the form of stored past experience. By such processes we reduce, and interpret the otherwise chaotic flow of information reaching consciousness to a limited number of differentiated, stable and meaningful precepts from which reality is constructed ... Now let us suppose there is a breakdown in this selective-inhibitory function of attention. Consciousness will be flooded with an undifferentiated mass of incoming sensory data, transmitted from the environment via the sense organ. To this involuntary tide of impression there would be added the diverse internal images, and their association, which would no longer be coordinate with incoming information. Perception would revert to the passive and involuntary assimilative process of early childhood and, if the incoming flood were to carry on unchecked, it would gradually sweep away the stable constructs of a former reality". (McGhie, & Chapman, 1961).

The German psychologist Oswald Kulpe (1893) insisted that without the capacity for attention "consciousness would be at the mercy of external impressions ... thinking would be made impossible

2 Eugen Bleuler, *Dementia praecox, or the Group of Schizophrenias*, 1911, trans. Joseph Zinkin (New York: International Universities Press, 1950)p.68). In Crary (2001) p.34.

by the noisiness of our surroundings”³

The notion of attention and the importance of attentiveness was well known before the 19th century. The main difference is that it used to be described as part of the other functioning of the brain and it was a marginal problem within explanations of the mind and consciousness. It became fundamentally important and a central issue within the epistemological thought during another process that we can refer as “modernization of subjectivity” (Crary, 2001)

St. Augustine (354-430) characterized human attention in terms of its essential temporality, unlike the divine knowledge: “Nor does God’s attention pass from one thought to another; all things which he knows are present at the same time to his incorporeal vision, He knows events in time without any temporal acts of knowledge”⁴ . These are words that echoes an old belief in the existence of a ‘know all god’. It is interesting to think of how ‘attention’ is described here as an obstacle of human capacity to comprehend the world as a whole, And as a central factor which differentiate between humans and god.

An interesting summary of the eighteenth-century epistemological thought was made by Karl.M.Figilio:

“The Understanding was built up from sensations combined by association. Sensations were focused upon by attention, which allowed the comparison of ideas derived from them. In the comparison and evaluation of two or more ideas lay the essence of reason and judgment. Imagination and memory implied the presentation... of ideas already preserved in the common sensory.”

I would like to suggest here that this sentence can be read as a description of the photographic practice: this sentence combines the important aspects by which the photographic practice enables a reflective and contemplative approach towards the world. If for a moment we will change the word ‘Attention’ with the word ‘Camera’ we will get a description of the process of creating knowledge and consciousness by this technical-mechanical way of producing images. It is interesting to think how modernity created a tool that can imitate and sharpen such a fundamental ability such as paying attention:

“The Understanding was built up from sensations combined by association. Sensations were focused upon by a **camera**, which allowed the comparison of ideas derived from them (onto a two-

3 Oswald Kulpe, *Outlines of Psychology* (1893), trans. Edward Bradford Titchener (London: Sonnenschein, 1985) p.215. in Crary (2001). P.16

4 City of God, trans. Henry Bettenson (London: Penguin 1972). In Crary(2001) p.17

dimensional surface). In the comparison and evaluation of two or more ideas lay the essence of reason and judgment. Imagination and memory implied the presentation... of ideas already preserved in the common sensory. (Figlio, 1975) ⁵

Etienne Bonnot de Condillac, (1715-1780) a French philosopher who studied the area of psychology and the philosophy of the mind during the eighteenth century. For him Attention was one contributing element of many that was necessary to the operation of mental life. For him, attention was burst by sensations of an exterior force upon the subject. This model forms the mind as a passive receiver of sensations and doesn't put a specific emphasis on the problem of attention.⁶

The work of philosopher Peirre Maine de Biran (1766-1824) was the first to anticipate some later nineteenth-century notions about attention; He was also the first to consider Attention as an equally important factor in the constructing of knowledge such as: judgment, memory, perception and meditation. Moreover later on through his notions about the very nature of intuition, he opened up his contemplation about the mobility and dynamic nature of 'Will', which in turn became part of the main discourse about attention and will. ⁷

My wish in this chapter is less to demonstrate a coherent historic time-line in the development of the problem of attention but to use this process in order to think through it about the nature of photographic practice and the photographic thought. Therefore I will put an emphasis on terms in the research of attention which has a parallel meaning in the discourse of photography.

John Dewey in his text books from 1886 wrote about the Camera Obscure model of attention: "In attention we focus the mind, as the lens takes all the light coming to it, and instead of allowing it to distribute itself evenly concentrates it in a point of great light and heat. So the mind, instead of diffusing consciousness over all the elements presented to it, brings it all to bear upon someone selected point, which stands out with unusual brilliancy and distinctness" (Dewey, 1886)

Attention as a process of 'selection' inevitably implies that perception is an activity of exclusion, of rendering, of putting an emphasis on one thing instead of another. By the usage of the camera the photographer is ultimately facing the act of selection in its highest form. The camera is an assistant

5 Emphasis added.

6 Etienne Bonnot de Condillac, "Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge", in *Philosophical Writings of Etienne Bonnot de Condillac*, vol. 2, trans. Franklin Philip (Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1987), pp. 441-455. In Crary (2001) p.18.

7 Peirre Maine de Biran, *De l'apperception immediate* (1807; Paris: J.vrin, 1963) In Crary (2001) p.20

tool which promotes and creates attentiveness which is a fundamental quality in the construction of knowledge and experience; Freud wrote in his essay 'The Origins of Psycho-analysis' that attention was a "fundamental condition of its (psychological) knowledge" (Sigmund, 1954)

Jonathan Crary⁸ summarized the main issues that have been part of the discourse about 'attention' in the cultural, psychological and philosophical arena, grouping them into three 'loose' categories which deals with the nature of 'attention':

1. Some saw 'attention' as an expression of ones conscious will; they saw 'Attention' as voluntary act which is controlled by the choices made by a subject; Attention is a factor that emphasis the existence of a self-freedom, of the freedom of will.
2. Others considered 'attention' as a function of biologically determined instincts, unconscious drivrs, which are fixed in advance and that are part of archaic evolutionary heritage, which shape our relation to an environment.

This thought was central in Freud who saw the subjective experience as a result of an unconscious process, and didn't think of the 'attentiveness' of a subject as a main forming source of experience. He saw 'attention' as a tool which can be manipulated toward a deeper understanding of the subject's unconscious streams. He used Hypnosis as a practice which is manipulating ones attention toward the sphere of the unconscious in order to use this sealed awareness and flood it into the surface of consciousness.

It is interesting to point out, at this context, the work of Wilhelm Dilthey who firmly opposed the notion of the independent unconsciousness and put his emphasis on the act of 'attentiveness'. He imagined consciousness as a vast terrain that was illuminated only in a very small areas by a beam of attention : "If I am looking out the window and perceive a landscape, the light of consciousness may well distribute itself evenly over the entire landscape. But as soon as I try to apprehend a single tree or even a branch in greater detail, the consciousness which I direct toward the rest of the landscape diminishes"⁹. He saw 'attention' as the main factor which formulate consciousness.

I would like to discuss an important term in the photographic language which is resonating the role of 'attentiveness' as it was described above. The photographic term "depth-of-field" seem to me, after reading Dilthey's description, as a demonstrative way to understand the function of the

8 Crary, 2001 p.25

9 Wilhelm Dilthey, Introduction to the Human Sciences (1883), ed Rudolf A.Makkreel and Frithjof Robi (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp.317-318. see Johnantan cracy p.58.

photographic aperture in the creation of photographic perception. When the photographic aperture is in open state (f2.8 for example) it creates an image which concentrates on one spot while all other aspects of the world become blur and non-recognizable (abstracted). The image that is captured by an open aperture is parallel to Dilthey's image of the functioning of attention in the construction of consciousness.

On the other side of this spectrum stands the state of a closed aperture (f64 for example) which creates a picture of the world – drastically different from the one that is captured by human perception- where all the elements are sharp and clear. It is a description of the world which offers a different kind of consciousness. The 'close-aperture-image' creates a two-dimensional stage which is using the qualities of 'attentiveness' in a different way; the observer attentiveness is guided by a compositional logic which controls his attentiveness in a different manner. This sharp and clear image offers a different kind of observation which might be closer in spirit to Freud, in the sense that manipulates attention and thus exposing particulars of unconscious.

In the history of photography, the realization of this special photographic qualities was demonstrated through the transition between the pictorial-movement (which used mainly 'soft focus' in order to avoid any traces of photographic sharpness) to the straightforward –photography, a movement which called itself f64, to emphasize the important role of the photographic aperture in the definitions of the photographic language and its relationship toward the perception of the outer world. (This point will be discussed later on in chapter 2.

3. Attention and attentiveness by a subject can be managed through the knowledge and control of external procedures of stimulation as well as a wide ranging technology of 'attraction'.

This notion refers to experiments made in psychology practices in order to 'make sensation measurable', and put the subject of attentiveness as a site of observation and classification. Gustav Fechner¹⁰ attempted in 1850 to quantify subjective experience by defining his famous unit of measurement "a just noticeable difference" or JND. This definition underlines the discontinuities in perception, which implies the fragmented and non-homogeneous nature of perception. Simultaneously suggesting other subjective operation such as distraction and anaesthetization, that became the core interest of thinkers such as Freud and Nietzsche.

I would like to emphasize at this point the Camera as a technical tool. Vilém Flusser wished to create a platform for the philosophy of photography, and started by defining the photographic product as

10 Fechner, Gustav. *Elemente der Psychophysik*. 2 vols. Leipzig: Breitkopf und Hartel, 1860. English trans as *Elements of Psychophysics*, trans. Helmut Adler. New York: Holt, Rinehart, 1966.] See Cray p.26

a 'Technical image', produced by apparatus. Apparatus as Flusser defines, is "a toy which simulates thought" (Flusser, 2000). He said 'simulate' but I would like to say **stimulate**, and by this to make the final bridge between experience and consciousness.

In this context the camera, can be thought of as a room that eliminates the outer world into points-of-view. By the definition of a point-of-view this creates a specific and critical viewpoint toward the 'Real' and therefore shape our experience and knowledge about the perceived world.

I would like to think now for a moment about the technical differences between the action of the hand and the action of the eye and try to raise some thoughts about the special consciousness that the photographic act and the photographic image produces. On one hand, the photographic image was made by human, but still it lacks the final finger print and creates a new kind of a signature which can be approached as a 'sight print'. Here we start to deal with one important essence of the photographic representation, which has more to do with awareness and knowledge of the observer and the photographer, than with a physical gesture made by paint brush. The mark which the photographer leaves on the surface of his images is a new kind of expressionism.

I would like to think for a moment about the term 'sensitive surface' and apply it by thought to the photographer himself – by defining the photographic material as 'sensitive' the notion and the possibility of being sensitive is raised. That's brings us back into the thoughts about seeing and knowing. In French these two are etymologically connected; savoir (to know) and voir (to see), suggesting here a small notion about this specific sight-print eye-craft which is the special photographic imaginable brush. (Jay,1993)

The model of Attention has changed quite drastically during the 20th century, which still consider 'Attention' as a main problem within the understanding of human perception and the investigation of modernity. But from the late 19th century onwards the traditional problems of the epistemological nature of attention transformed by the modern shift to a semantic and semiotic frameworks of analysis.

Ludwig Wittgenstein, which puts his emphasis on the Philosophy of Language, re-thinks about the relationship between 'attention' and 'consciousness': "But don't the words 'I perceive' here show that I am attending to my consciousness? – Which is ordinarily not the case, – If so, than the sentence 'I perceive I am conscious' does not say that I am conscious, but that my attention is disposed in such-and-such a way". Attention here becomes a way describing or explaining a perceiving subject, it become a "constitutive (and destabilizing) component of perception". ¹¹

¹¹ Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigation, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan, 1953) p.125) In Crary, 2001, p.44

The main difference between the two centuries was the ability to grasp irrationality and handle chaotic order as a fundamental and inevitable starting point. Modernity was at the threshold of a new world, and as such many aspects of its rationality tried to obtain grasp in this everlasting change, they tried to build a coherent knowledge, as Foucault puts it: " To make this knowledge of man exist so that man could be liberated by it from his alienations, liberated from all the determinations of which he was not the master, so that he could, thanks to this knowledge of himself, become again or for the first time master of himself, self-possessed. In other words, one made a man an object of knowledge so that man could become subject of his own liberty and his own existence" (Foucault, 1989).

On the threshold in between the centuries, one important philosopher has anticipated this movement in thought and in 1844 wrote about the unstable and specifically temporal nature of perception. It was Schopenhauer who put the emphasis on human anguish and on the identification of temporality itself. He was the first to note the link between attention and perceptual disintegration, comparing this "defective" and "fragmentary" nature of subjective attentiveness to: " a magic lantern, in the focus of which only one picture can appear at a time; and every picture, even when it depicts the most noble thing, must nevertheless soon vanish to make way for the most different and even the most vulgar thing".¹²

In his book; "The World as will and Representation" he discussess the fragmented perception of the senses which 'jumps' between associations, when 'memory' itself is also forever temporal and lack of continuation. He gives the eye and its disability to stay in focus for a long while, as another example: the fragmented nature of human sight which in any given moment contains both the concrete and its abstracted options.

I find these notions about the nature of perception close to the nature of the photographic practice. The photographic practice is formed, as I see it, by three main categories: attention, associations and distractions; which are also the ways we perceive the world.

The camera by imitating the practice of the eye and yet on the same note by enabling the possibility to delay perceptions, to linger on upon an object, enables a contemplative mode and creates the possibility of a critical thought. I am using a large format camera which creates a stage for observation. The ability to be inside an apparatus has a tremendous importance in my practice: it is articulating the way I work and think. The large-format camera is simulating the work of the

12 Schopenhauer, *The World as will and Representation*, 2 vols. Trans. E. F. J. Payne. New York: Dover, 1966, pp.137-138. In Crary, (2001) pp.54-57

brain, which is in charge to decode the fragmented information that the eye produces. Therefore every camera and the large format camera in particular are simulating the work of the brain and not the work of the eye.

Nowadays it has been changing rapidly; the technological developments in the photographic field have changed the core meaning of the photographic image: in the digital-photography the act of observation becomes closer to the act of the eye; digital-photography came closer to human perception. It happens because of the technical changes that changed the methods of creating and observing an image.

The availability both in economic aspects of production and distribution of images, which became cheap, and easy to produce¹³, also changed the working methods both of professional photographers as well as amateur photographers. The mass-production of digital images creates a photographic sphere of "blind-spots": the observer changed, the act of observation changed. The visual over flood of our days evokes sensorial flood and promotes blindness. It's a different language within the world of images.¹⁴ It is an epistemological change in the nature of photography, which changed the status and state of the photographic image, as a surface that offers a different set for contemplation.

In Hebrew there is a connection between the words 'to linger-on' and 'to wonder'; it's a phonetic connection, 'Mishtahe' – to linger, versus, 'Mishtae' – to wonder, which offers a way to think about the photographic act as a slower process which offers the possibility to wonder. This notion takes me to another linguistic research back to the Latinate origin of the word 'contemplation'; which is 'contemplationem' which means "act of looking at, viewing or considering with continued attention" (Tillich, 1955)

The continuity of attention is what unifies and distinguishes the photographic perception from the daily one. And which enable a thinking-photographer to articulate, or at least try to articulate his thoughts clearly. By using of photographic language; depth of field, point-of-view, composition, color, contrast, etc'. It is the continuous dialogue between 'Form' and 'Contents' which creates the photographic meaning. (I will go back to this issue in the second chapter "Realizing Realism").

13 Which takes us actually back into the discourse about George Eastman wishes to bring photography and images into the use of the common people, by building cheap, handy, and easy to use cameras. The digital photography is an extension of his wishes.

14 View second chapter 'Realizing-Realism'.

Attention-Distraction and the Photographic Series

An interesting characteristic of Attention is the fact that it is a temporal and forever bonded with distraction, I would like now to discuss the importance of distractions in the creation of knowledge both in terms of human perception and in the photographic process of building a series, a sequence of images which creates meaning. The photographic editing methods are varied; I will divide them into three main groups:

1. Typology – this method puts an emphasis on similarity and formalistic uniformity. It started with the Bechers famous work 'The Water Towers', which offered a homogeneous way of observation as an option to handle the observer attentiveness. By the usage of repetition, they opened the door for distraction caused by the minor differences, which underline and created the meaning of the series.

Typological point of view is characterized as an 'objective' and 'objectified', which means that the photographic 'frame work' tries to avoid any distraction that can be described as a personal subjective point-of-view; In practice it means that they do not use special angles but try to stand in front of an object and 'let it speak' by itself.

They do not use 'selective focus' and their subject matters are connected thematically. The Bechers have a great significant in the evolvement of the photographic thought. They built up a continuum logic in order to put-into-light the distractions of differences and by doing so articulated a unique platform for photographic attentiveness which wish to linger on the similarities in order to show the differences.

Jonathan Crary¹⁵ underlines that: "Attention and Distraction exist on a single continuum, and thus attention was... a dynamic process, intensifying and diminishing, rising and falling, ebbing and flowing according to an indeterminate set of variables".

Walter Benjamin actually saw distraction and concentration as a "polar opposites" which held forth the possibility of a new modes of perception. Crary instead insists: "that attention and distraction cannot be thought outside of a continuum in which the two ceaselessly flow into one another, as part of a social field in which the same imperatives and forces incite one and the other".

2. The New-Document: An exhibition by the curator John Szarkowski at the Museum of Modern Art in 1967. It featured the works of Diane Arbus, Lee Friedlander, and Garry Winogrand, and became best known for its innovative approach toward subject matter in documentary photography. It offered a different point of view; which takes as a main consideration the photographer subjectivity.

¹⁵ Crary,(2001) pp.47-52

It offered a different approach and motivations from what was described as the 'Considered-Photographer'; photographers such as Lewis Wickes Hine and Eugene Smith which aimed to document issues in order to evoke social awareness and to make a real change – a journalistic approach which is using the photographic work as a stimulator for public attention.

Arbus, Friedlander and Winogrand searched for something else. They showed us a world that by the miraculous frame work and marginal subject matters created a bizarre and unusual documentation of daily life. They used distractions as a main element both in form; camera angles, and in content; by juxtaposition of two or more opposing elements which created the necessary attention.

The main importance of those photographers was the acknowledgment in the importance of 'perspective' and the ability to create a multi layered image which produced a more complex sentence which refers not only to the outer-world but also handle a more tangible complexities of the photographer himself. They made photographers into Authors which instead of a finger print leave their deep eye-print upon the shiny surface of the final image. (Burgin, 1982)

3. Fragmentation: this group deals, as I see it, with the importance of surprise as a construction of attention, John Dewey wrote: "A shock of surprise is the most effective methods of arousing attention. The unexpected in the midst of the routine is the accentuated." (Dewey, 1886)

The work of Wolfgang Tillmans is a clear example of this method of a series work. His subject matters are connected under the wide umbrella of his own life experiences; It goes from rave parties and young culture through a symbolic still-life images till the random effect of light projection on photosensitive surface, an abstract work which he titled as; 'free swimming'.

His way of handling images can be best described by Schopenhauer's notions about attention and distraction: " Sometimes one idea draws in another by the bond of association... Just as the eye, when it gazes for a long time at one object, is soon not able to see it distinctly any longer, because the outlines run into one another, become confused, and finally everything becomes obscure".¹⁶

Tillmans practice goes from a concrete thought into the vagueness of an abstract thought. He is building a different kind of a coherent thought. His coherency goes under the veins; his works leave me as an observer with some strong intuition, mental one, whose coherence is laying somewhere in-between the known and the unreachable.

16 Schopenhauer, *The World as will and Representation*, 2 vols. Trans. E. F. J. Payne. New York: Dover, 1966, pp.137-138. P:55

In the same way Tillmans handles the gallery walls, by an endless juxtaposing of varied sizes of images, which he gathered from a different work methods; the outcome is a fragmented sequence which tells the story of the X generation. It is a work that uses photography as a freed and diverse way of expression.

In a way Tillmans work marked the path toward what is called 'contemporary photography' and created some democratic evaluation and a formula, which was in my opinion, many times handled without a guardian and became another streams in the flood of images. It has been said that in a post-modern world the distinctions between high and low culture are missing. I find this state tricky because on the one hand it enable culture to blossom and become more authentic but on the other hand photography has already fought its battle for recognition and got its credit through a meaningful way of expression which photographers managed to create.

I feel, as an observer, that photography is losing its ability to communicate because of lack of focus, lack in attention and lack of intentions.

Text, Image, Attention and Intention

Images are visual texts. The eye which scans the surface of an image finds itself standing in front of visual notes that are the result of coincidence and chance and which creates a pragmatic tale through the use of common signs. The image is an open space where meaning and emotion can be subjectively interpreted by the viewer.

The relationship between an Image and its caption is an aggressive one. The image, once it got a specific title, is enforced to stand out for some idea. Captions are a tool to discipline images;

An interesting work made by Ariela Azuly, an Israeli visual theorist, examines the role of photography in the establishment of the Israeli occupation. She examines the photographic representation from the years 1947-1950 in the Israeli media and in national archives. She puts a great emphasis on the verbal captions that accompanied the images, showing how the title immediately change the visual information, and suggesting interpretation of the photographic scene. The captions created a recruited reading of reality, and formed the Israeli-Palestine history.¹⁷

A caption creates another platform for meaning which In a combination with an image might create

¹⁷ Constituent Violence 1947-1950 - A genealogy of a regime and "a catastrophe from their point of view" - Ariella Azoulay)

a third story; a third hidden and imaginable image. Captions point out the photographer intentions and make the photographic surface less open for the interpretation of the observer. Or maybe it is the opposite; it opens up the image into a different set of considerations.

I am using captions as a tool for pointing-out the meanings that I see in my images; not out of the wish to close them-up, hermetically, but the opposite is true, I use captions in order to communicate my intentions more clearly.

Edmund Husserl developed a visual model as part of his quest for "seeing essences"¹⁸ Husserl wished to connect 'attention' to a specific content, he make the connection between 'attention' and 'intentionality': "Attention is an emphatic function which belongs among acts ... of intentional experiences".¹⁹

The question of Attention and Will was approached in many different ways along the history of psychology and was the content of many philosophical investigations and arguments.

The emphasis that Husserl suggests by connecting between attention and intention is my core interest in this chapter; the photographic practice is lead by attention and articulated through intention.

As Edward Weston puts it in his writings:

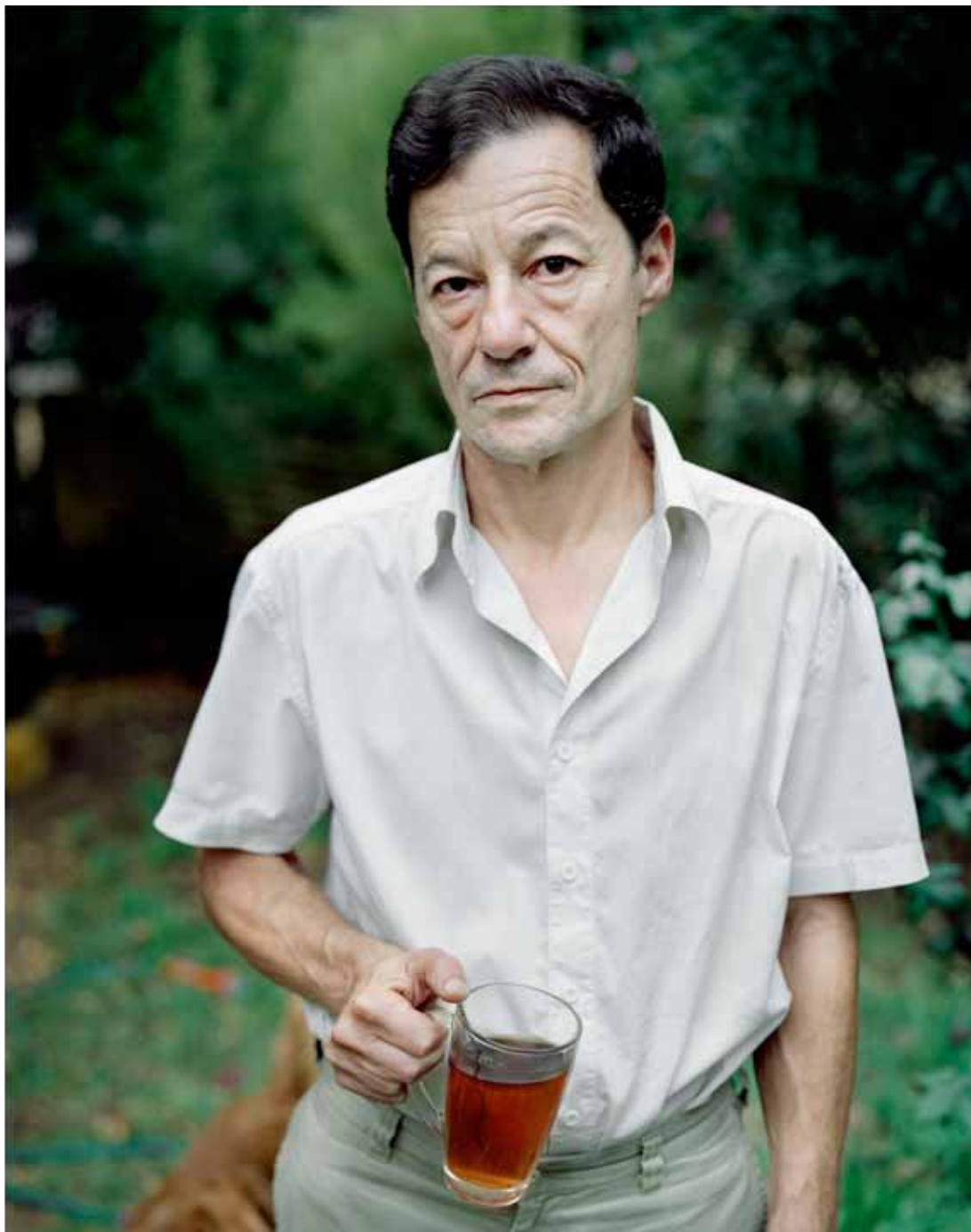
*"I was awake at 4:00, my mind full of banana froms!
I have two new lovers, banana and shells"²⁰ (April 4, 1928)*

18 Husserl, Edmund. *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, trans. Quentin Lauer (New York: Harper & Row. 1965), p.111. See Crary pp.281-287

19 Husserl, Edmund. *Logical Investigation (1899-1901)*. Trans. J. N. Findlay. 2 vols. New York: Humanities Press, 1970, pp. 586-587. See Crary p.283

20 Weston, 1983.

“In Memory Of”



In memory of a few silent moments with my father



In memory of a House



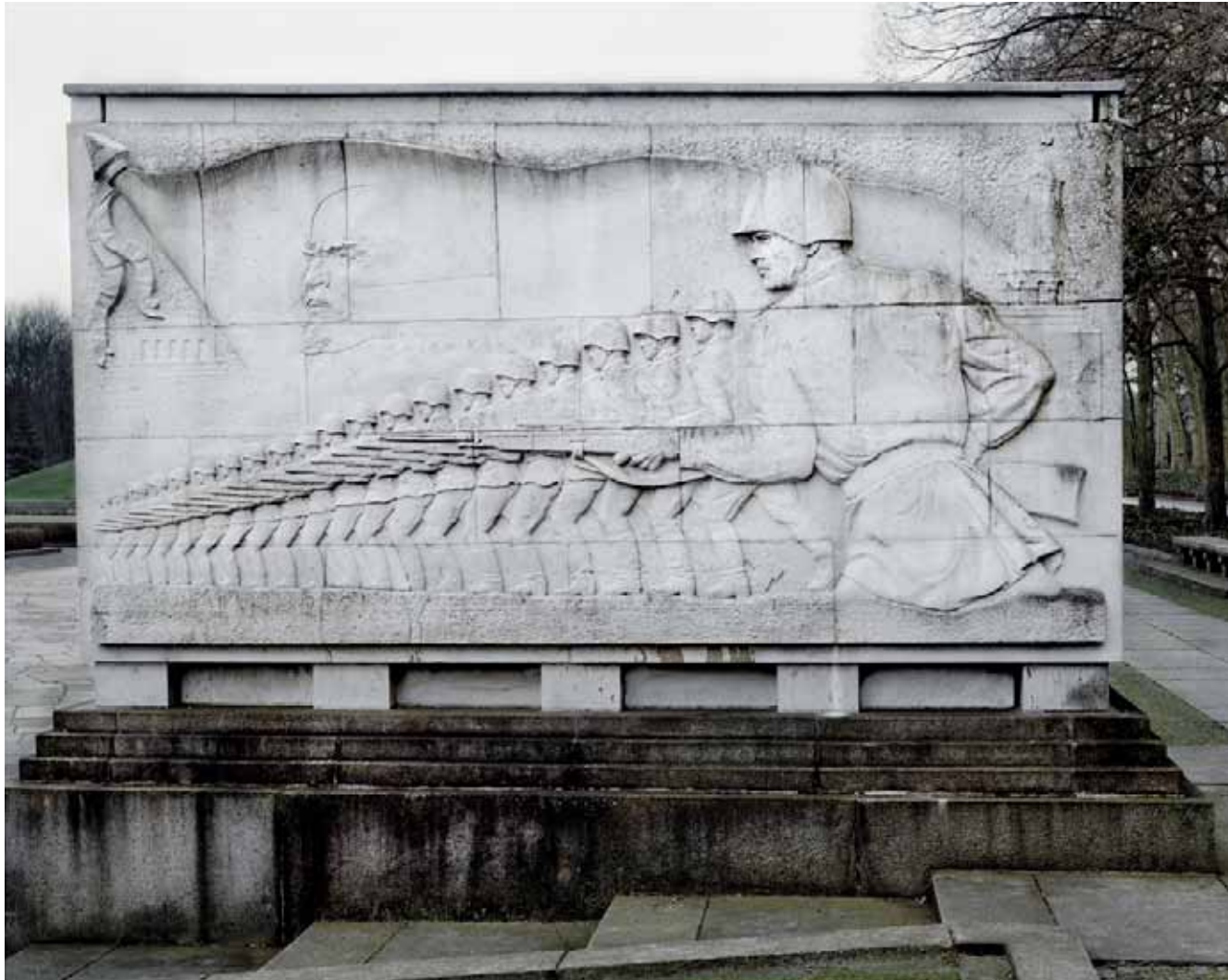
In memory of small drama with a dog and a cat



In memory of being abused



In memory of natural resistance No.1



In memory of perspective



In memory of my house prototype obsession



In memory of just being



In memory of bad visual articulation

Realizing Realism

"I do not photograph what I see; I photograph what I imagine I see. With the help of my camera I am than bringing it into light." (from my diary, Finland 2011)

In this chapter I would like to discuss the complex relationship between the 'Real' and the photographic representation. I will use different works in the field of photography; going from 'Pictorialism', to the 'Straight -Photography' and the f64 group. From here onward I will be less devoted to the historical path of the development of photographic representation and will start to articulate the special connection between the photographic thought and its relation towards the 'Real' as it articulated through the photographic gesture. I will put an emphasis on the work of Alfred Stieglitz, Edward Weston, Vik Moniz, William Eggelstone, Jeff Wall, Gerhard Richter, Wolfgang Tillmans, and Lee Friedlander

From the very beginning, Photography struggled to define its place in the world, as art or as a document or as a scientific fact. It might seem a bit irrelevant to go back to the times when photography tried to find its place within the world of images but through the basic arguments of the 'Modern' thought, the recognition in the contemporary stage of the photographic image may become more layered and clear.

As I see it, photography did not evolve so much. We are just more open to different point of views; the photographic universe is a democratic one, which allows the combination of varied methods of representation. This is our 'post-modern' way of being.

Some critics may argue that photography nowadays goes into what can be described as "post-photography" stage. I would like to claim that 'post-photography' is actually a different kind of 'pictorealism'. In the post-photography world the digital-photography and the computer based image actually open its doors to a different kind of manipulations that were also an important part in the wishes of the Pictorial-photo making. The motivations are different. It is no longer an imitation of a different medium out of the wish to be conceived as high art. The post-photography stage is more about using photography as the starting point for a different kind of evaluations; graphical ones; or should I say formal ones, informative rather than a representational.

During the late nineteenth-century and the early twentieth-century a new movement was established sharing style and aesthetic considerations which saw in the photographic surface a starting-point toward the creation of an artistic statement rather than appreciating the photographic surface as an autonomous byproduct of the camera. They wished to imitate other fine art mediums and methods of work in order to let photography enter the pantheon of the 'Fine Arts'. It has been the base for the most profound debates among artists, philosophers and critics which eventually managed to point out the most important qualities of this new medium.

The pictorialists used brushes, filters and other tools in order to get rid of the photographic surface, and make it more similar to an image that was handled by hand. Many techniques were in use, one of which was the 'combination print' mastered by Henry Peach Robinson which used the photographic surface as a blank paper. He was composing an image out of many different negatives that created at the end a fictional image. The subject-matters that he handled were borrowed from the history of painting, and created a hybrid photo-image which can be considered today as the pre-digital manipulated image, of which we can see the implication in Loreta Lux's practice for example.

"For the pictorialist, a photograph, like a painting, drawing or engraving, was a way of projecting an emotional intent into the viewer's realm of imagination" (Daum, 2006).

I must admit at this point that I feel my photographic practice is close to this definition. I guess that the struggle of people like Weston and Ansel Adams was important for the realization that the characteristic of the photographic image goes far beyond its daily appearance into the realm of imagination. Nowadays it seems obvious but we do need to take a brief look at the past.

When I just started to take pictures, with my sister's old Pentax Camera, I was fascinated by the ability of a photograph to look like a painting. I was an autodidact and never heard the term 'Pictorialism'. I used to take pictures of leaves and stones and silhouette of things using selective depth of field and manipulate the focus. Many times I found myself laying in the mud searching frantically for the right angle. I was excited by the possibility of the abstract within the realm of the 'Real'. It was only when I started to study photography that one of my teachers suggested me gently to look at the reality the camera offers to me rather than to try to find abstracted forms within the 'real'. It was an interesting advice since it formulated my sight into the place where I do look at the 'real': I opened my frame, I closed my aperture, I started to use a large format camera, but in some way I still used my abstracted sight skills in order to critically articulate myself in front of my subject-matters.

The 'Straight-Photography', went against the pictorial-photo-image movement and wished to articulate themselves throughout photographic features such as deep of field (as it resonates through the name f64), in order to promote photographic sight as the main thing that characterizes this medium. They created their aesthetic evaluations through the abilities which are embedded within the camera-aperture-operator that formulate their relation toward reality.

I would like to linger here on the work of two important photographers which are situated in different disciplines, but as I see it they are close and connected under similar wishes: Edward Weston and Alfred Stieglitz, or should I write: Alfred Stieglitz and Edward Weston, just to be more precise!

Stieglitz was a central figure in the history of photography, he owned a gallery for photography and was the editor of the two main photography magazines, Camera Work and Camera Notes, which promoted photography as a fine art. He was the founder of the important group of 'Photo-Secession'

which among other things gathered the work of important photographers at that time and created the first photography show in the USA at the Arts Club in early March 1902. He himself acknowledged in 1915 the important development in the photographic sight, demonstrated through the work of Paul Strand. Strand came to his gallery 291 to introduce him to a new photographic vision that was embodied by the bold lines of everyday forms. Stieglitz was one of the first to see the beauty and grace of Strand's style, and he gave Strand a major exhibit at 291. He also devoted almost the entire last issue of Camera Work to Strand's photographs. (Stieglitz, 2008)

It was Paul Strand who introduces Stieglitz in 1922 to the work of Edward Weston. In Weston notes about their meeting he writes the critic that Stieglitz gave him: "I like the way in which you attack each picture as a new problem – you are not formulated ." (Weston, 1983). The encounter between the two is described by Weston with a lot of humor and respect; although they are from different disciplines they both share the same wish to explore this new medium and they both established photographic notions that had great importance and influence on photography as we know it today. I would like now to start to form a nonlinear line which will connect the streams of photographic thoughts from the early twentieth - century till nowadays.



"Spining Composition
Woman With Portfolios,
1905, Rober Demachy

From Cloud to Cloud – the Evolution of the Photographic Thought



Alfred Stieglitz
"Equivalent"
1925

Alfred Stieglitz: "I wanted to photograph clouds to find out what I had learned in forty years about photography. Through clouds to put down my philosophy of life – to show that (the success of) my photographs (was) not due to subject matter – not to special trees or faces, or interiors, to special privileges – clouds were there for everyone..."(Stieglitz, 1923)

Stieglitz photographed the 'Equivalents' during the period of 1925 to 1934. It had a huge impact on the world of photography, since it was considered to be the first 'Abstract' work that have been done which aimed to free the subject matter from its literal interpretation.

New York Times art critic Andy Grundberg said The Equivalents "remain photography's most radical demonstration of faith in the existence of a reality behind and beyond that offered by the world of appearances. They are intended to function evocatively, like music, and they express a desire to leave behind the physical world, a desire symbolized by the virtual absence of horizon and scale

clues within the frame. Emotion resides solely in form, they assert, not in the specifics of time and place.”(Grundberg, 1983)

From here I would like to explore the work of Vik Muniz. Vik Muniz was born in 1961 in Brazil. He started his artistic way as a sculptor and found his way into photography when his galeriest invited a photographer to photograph his work “Clown Skull” from his “Relics” series, 1989. He describes his first notions about the nature of the photographs of his sculpture: “The images seemed to me to work as well as the objects – to the point that they could replace the objects ... The sculpture depicted in them (the images) did not seem to be mine anymore”. Puzzled by this feeling he went directly to a camera dealer and bought his first point-and-shoot camera. He then took the pictures by himself – without a tripod, with the wrong light the wrong exposure, but: “Although there was no way to compare my photographs to the ones made by the professional, mine looked more real, more authentic, and more mine.” (Muniz, 2005 p.17).

Having concluded that, Muniz continued to struggle with question about representation and came to the conclusion that it depends on a “very specific vantage point”. He came to the realization that: “when I took the photographs, I intuitively searched for a vantage point that would make the picture identical to the ones in my head before I’d made the works. My photographs matched those mental images”. (Ibid. P.21)

From that point he realized that a sculpture has its vantage point and that the artist created it according to this point of view. He realized that: “The fact that we can walk around sculptures does not necessarily means that we are experiencing the objects in relation to what was intended at the moment of their creation.” (Ibid. P.21)

This encounter with photography made him realize the nature of photography: “Photography does not reveal the world as a whole, but a carefully edited version of it. It’s not linked to truth in any circumstances, because it is bound to an opinion, making it more human than mechanical. Also, photography has the power of rendering visual input not as the eye perceives it, but as the brain develops it – as a finished intellectual product” (Ibid. P.21)

“Since photographs are invented by the brain and not by the eye, their Language conform to mental images, rather than raw optical input. Also photography relies heavily on memory and form recognition. ... the photographer Scans the physical world until he finds a template that fits with his mental database; only then he press the shutter.” (Ibid. P.21)

It took him a few more years in which he created sculpture-photos. His path toward the creation of photographic works will forever be connected with perception, he mainly deals with consciousness, human perception; visual memory, and the realization of Form- Material- Content relationships.

Around 1993 Vik Muniz continued his visual investigations turning this time towards the clouds: "The habit of looking at clouds, searching for forms, although considered a popular infantile pastime, is a perfect example of the intellectual engagement between the mind and the visual world... because of their versatility of form, clouds are perfect vessels for meaning; they invite interpretation – pure interpretation – and in their vagueness, they betray visual and linguistic convictions." (Ibid. P.39)

Dealing with this spectrum of Abstracted form, Muniz started to sculpture shapes out of cotton, in order to deal "with basic aspects of likeness and interpretation". Rather than to create an accurate resemblance he wished "to make the worst possible illusion. An illusion so simple and rudimentary that it would start the viewer thinking... I wanted to present them with the measure of their own beliefs – to engage them in a relationship with the image, to allow them to see in the image whatever they choose to see" (Ibid. P.40)

He mentions the work of L.A. Necker which in 1832 created optical illusions, that sometimes call "multistable images" which represent the most easily understood threshold of visual ambiguity: pictures like the "Duck-Rabbit"; Images like this one served as models for introspection by psychologists, philosophers and neurologists, as a tool for understanding human perception. Vik muniz inspired by this model wished to take his contemplation about ambiguity into the sphere of Aesthetics; "I wanted to create images that would allow the viewer to shift readings, and to become aware of his own participation. I wanted the result to be cross-disciplinary, but within the limits of visual experience... I wanted a single object to be readable as cloud, snail and cotton simultaneously"... but He found that, as in Necker's case, "two meanings can not be perceive at one time.

He photographed the cotton-cloud-figure objects and printed them with sepia-tones, while in other more early works Vik used to photograph his images slightly out-of-focus in order to get rid of traces of his hands upon the material and imitate the nature of a realistic photograph. This time he kept the natural appearance of the material in order to get a multi-layered image.

He named his work "Equivalents", in homage to Alfred Steiglitz and wrote about the differences between their motivations: "While Stieglitz relied on the ambiguity of the cloud's formation as a formal container for the complexity of his emotions, I decided to move my research into the participation of specificity".

Vik's work resonating to me the traces of Pictorialism, but this time its a back-forward movement.

I wonder what Stieglitz would have thought.



"The Rower",
 "Equivalents", 1993
 Vik Muniz

The relationship between the two continued miraculously when in 1995, Vik Muniz went to the Museum of Modern Art, to see the exhibition of Alfred Stieglitz; He stood in front of the small photographs, tried his best to see through Stieglitz eyes the marvelous of equivalence, He tried to avoid the day-dreaming process that he was forced to through the clouds appearance: " my mind wandered far and wide" trying his best to 'enter Stieglitz vague universe'.

At the end, disappointed he left the exhibition hall, when: "I gazed at the marble floor of the old museum building, and suddenly saw in those patterns a myriad of "equivalents" that Stieglitz would probably have loved. Somehow only then – through the filter of art – was I able to set aside my natural perceptual tricks,... I didn't see 'form within forms' any longer; I saw equivalency, as Stieglitz had." (Ibid. P.44)

He took his Camera and photographed the marble floor, afterward he printed the result on a paper similar to the paper that was used by Stieglitz, mounted his works the same way that Stieglitz mounted his. He titled the series "New Equivalents" 1996.

This episode emphasizing an interesting development in the visual language which is evolving through a visual dialogue of resemblance. The act of Stieglitz and the act of Muniz are different but still when they are put together, side by side, they arouse questions about the nature of the photographic thought and the vast possibilities for communication and knowledge which it offers.

I want to discuss another "cloud" that articulating another way of seeing, this time I would like to present the work of William Eggelston, which was the first photographer who worked in color, and it was then when color photography started to be thought of as another way of expression within "art-photography". It was a different way of representing the world. While the black-and-white photographic-image representation of the world offers a different sight from the human one, and dramatically render the world into a gray-scale image that created what was conceived as 'the photographic representation of the world'.



"Early Spring at
Mayfair, My Family
Plantation in
Sunflower Country,
Mississippi"
William Eggelston

The color photography by imitating more closely the way we see, created a different platform for meanings and reflections. Eggelston was the first photographer which exhibit color-photography in the context of art galleries.

Eggelston method of working is based on vagrancy, he is walking around with his camera, letting the everyday life to compose itself in front of his camera or maybe it is more true to say, he is composing life itself through his camera. It works both ways, photography is a mutual cooperation between the photographer and the everyday, they bond in a dialogue of shape and content, and reflect meanings upon each other.

Some might consider Eggelston's work as a documentary work. I find that the main importance in Eggelston's way of seeing is the combination between the public appearance and the private experience, which is articulated through the intelligence and the sensitivity of the photographer's own reflection.

John Szarkowski wrote about the relationship between Eggelston images and the 'real' as: "...patterns of random facts in the service of one's imagination - not to the real world. A picture is after all only a picture, a concrete kind of fiction, not to be admitted as hard evidence or as the quantifiable data of social scientists." (Szarkowski, 1976)

Eggelston in a conversation with Mark Holborn noted about the relationship of the common viewer in the encounter with the photographic image: "I am afraid that there are more people than I can imagine who can go no further than appreciating a picture that is a rectangle with an object in the middle of it, which they can identify. They don't care what is around the object as long as nothing interferes with the object itself, right in the centre. Even after the lessons of Winogrand and Friedlander, they don't get it. They respect their work because they are told by respectable institutions that they are important artists, but what they really want to see is a picture with a figure or an object in the middle of it. They want something obvious. The blindness is apparent when someone lets slip the word 'snapshot'. Ignorance can always be covered by 'snapshot'. The word has never had any meaning. I am at war with the obvious." (Eggelston, 1989)

At the beginning of this conversation Eggelston mentions another conversation that he had:

"... someone said, 'What have you been photographing here today, Eggelston?'

'Well, I've been photographing democratically,' I replied.

'But what have you been taking pictures of?'

'I've been outdoors, nowhere, in nothing.'

'What do you mean?'

'Well, just woods and dirt, a little asphalt here and there.'



"Miami"

William Eggleston

I consider Eggleston's work as a work that constructs myths out of the daily appearance; He does not tell only the story of a place. He composes what Allan Sekula defined as a 'Folk-Myth': "All photographic communication seems to take place within the conditions of a kind of binary folklore. That is, there is a 'symbolist' folk-myth and a 'realist' folk-myth". He continues by noting the differences among critics between "photography as art" and 'photography as document' saying that it's creating two different platforms for the evaluation of the photographic image: "the photographer as seer versus the photographer as a witness, photography as expression vs. photography as reportage, theories of imagination (and inner truth) vs. theories of empirical truth, effective value vs. informative value, metaphoric signification vs. metonymic signification" (Sekula, 1982).

Allan Sekula wrote these words around 1982. Today I think that the distinction between 'Art Photography' and 'Documentary photography' have shrunk and they both evaluated through a wider spectrum of thought which combines the two methods of critical investigation.



Berlin
William Eggelston

Jeff Wall and Gerhard Richter - 'Photo-Painting' and the 'Tableaux Morts'

"A Sudden Gust
Of Wind (after
Hokusai)", 1993
Jeff Wall



The relationship between photography and a painting was, as I already noted in the beginning of this chapter, a complicated relationship which put both mediums in a state of self assertion. Painters started to search ways of expressions that goes beyond the figurative imitation of the real in order to justify its validity as a way of expression. Photography after a few decades of pictorialism confusion, started to acknowledge its own values. Still they both share an approach of image-making which has the same wish: to contemplate about our conceptions of the world. Many painters nowadays using photography as a starting point for a visual investigation. I will now note the importance of Gerhard Richter, a painter, who refers to his works as pictures rather than a painting or photographs. He started using photographs since 1960 as a starting point for his visual investigations. He used pictures that he found in magazines, newspapers and in snapshots of family and friends. He notes about the pictorial connection between photography and painting:

"Of course, a long time ago, I thought a picture was a picture only if it was painted. Later on I found to my great surprise that I could see a photograph as a picture—and in my enthusiasm I often saw it as the better picture of the two. It functions in the same way: it shows the appearance of something that is not itself". (Richter, 1995)

In His 'photo-painting' Richter created a platform which somehow summarizes the vague connection between the photo and its depiction. By using the photographic appearance and reattaches it to the language of hand-craft, he creates a third surface which combines both mediums characters.



"Reader", 1994
Gerhard Richter

"Two Candles",
1982
Gerhard Richter

Jeff Wall, a Canadian photographer, rethinks about the place of the photographic medium within the realm of images. He started to create large-scales prints which he saw as the way to represent the photographic-tableau. He is contemplating about the terms 'picture' and 'tableau': "The Western Picture is, of course that tableau, that independently beautiful depiction and composition that derives from the institutionalization of perspective and dramatic figuration at the origins of modern Western art, with Raphael, Durer, Bellini and the other familiar maestri. It is known as a product of divine gift, high skill, deep emotion and crafty planning. It plays with the notion of the spontaneous, the unanticipated. The master picture-maker prepares everything in advance, yet trusts that all the planning in the world will lead only to something fresh, mobile, light and fascinating" (Wall, 1998)

Jeff Wall has referred to his images as "tableaux morts," playing on the term "tableaux vivant," and thus linking them to scenes staged theatrically by living persons in earlier centuries and after the invention of photography became a popular act which can be seen as the first staged-photography. Jeff Wall refers to his works as "pictures" and to his process as "making pictures." (Wall, 1987)



"The Two Ways of Life"
1857
Oscar Rejlander

The dialogue between photography and painting centered around the concept of the tableau is quite complex. The tableau has its roots in pictorialist photography. Pictorialism, according to Jeff Wall, could be seen as an attempt by photographers to unsuccessfully imitate painting: "Pictorialist photography was dazzled by the spectacle of Western painting and attempted, to some extent, to imitate it in acts of pure composition. Lacking the means to make the surface of its pictures unpredictable and important, the first phase of Pictorialism, Stieglitz's phase, emulated the fine graphic arts, re-invented the beautiful look, set standards for gorgeousness of composition, and faded." (Wall, 1998)

Pictorialism failed according to Jeff Wall because photographers lacked the means to make their surfaces unpredictable. However Photography did have the ability to become unpredictable and spontaneous. This was achieved by making photographs, related to the inherent capabilities of the camera itself which was the direct result of photo-journalism.

"By divesting itself of the encumbrances and advantages inherited from older art forms, reportage, or the spontaneous fleeting aspect of the photographic image pushes toward a discovery of qualities apparently intrinsic to the medium, qualities that must necessarily distinguish the medium from others and through the self-examination of which it can emerge as a modernist art on a plane with others." (Wall, 1998)

Walls claims that by the 'snap shot'; the "accidental" image, photography invents its own concept of the picture as a hybrid form of the Western Picture or pictorialist photography and the spontaneous snap shot. Wall claims that unpredictability is the key to modern aesthetics.

In his works he is using this 'accidental' notions, combining them with the staged nature of the "tableaux vivant", into a hybrid form of photographic-image, which contains the language of the 'snap shot', in a large-scale print which is taken from the legacy of the Western Picture. He creates a critical surface which is resonating toward the history of images, and re-thinks about the nature of the photographic representation within the world of art; Pointing-out the mythological nature of the photographic image.

In a conversation that he held with Jean-François Chevrier he is noting that: "I had a feeling that certain possibilities of photography, as a medium, could be implemented, possibilities that had remained invisible because of the institutional definition of the medium. Painting carried within it traces of these photographic possibilities, which I took pleasure in recognizing, right there in painting, as it happened....Why couldn't photographs be larger and physically involve the onlooker? Why couldn't they be in color?....It is in fact not exclusively up to painting to be able to produce an image on the human scale." (Wall, 2004)

About the relationship between photography and its subject-matters and modern-art, Wall is emphasizing: "Photography cannot find alternatives to depiction... It is in the physical nature of the medium to depict things. In order to participate in the kind of reflexivity made mandatory for modernist art, photography can put into play only its own necessary condition of being a depiction-which-constitutes-an-object" (Wall, 1998)

In his work "Mimic" Wall provides a critical sight which contains both the political aspects and issues that connected to the discourse of medium references. By using the word Mimic, Wall is gaining its multiple meaning both as a reference to the term 'mimetic art' and to the literal racist act of imitation perform by his male model.



"Mimic" 1982
Jeff Wall

In 1993 he started to create another kind of pictorial-photo relation, in his small series "Diagonal Composition", which is a term for a method of composition. Wall's appropriation of this term and the projection of its meaning on the photographic surfaces create an interesting notion about the relationship between form and content, and add some humoristic glimpse toward the conventions of art critique.



"Diagonal Composition",
1993
Jeff Wall



"24.2.98"

1998

Gerhard Richter

I would like to finish this sub-chapter with a work of a contemporary photographer, Winni Wintermeyer, who made a simple, but yet nice gesture to Gerhard Richter image:



"After The Reader"
Winni Wintermeyer

Between Analogue to Digital: Henry Peach Robinson, Loretta Lux, and the Blank Page



"At The Window"
2004,
Loretta Lux

Henry Peach Robinson published in 1869 an important book titled "Pictorial Effect in Photography: Being Hints On Composition And Chiaroscuro For Photographers", where he was the first to describe the term 'pictorial' in a relevance to the photographic image.

He is best known as the inventor and a keen user of the "combination-print method" which considered the photographic image as a blank page which the photographer, the composer, can use as a sensitive surface which can combine many different negatives into one image. He uses sketches in order to plan his pictures, imitating, in this way, also the working methods of a painter.

His practice seem to me important in the light of the latest development in the photographic representation, the move from analogic image to a digital one. Manipulation on the surface of the photograph exists in many kinds of representation. What I find unique in his work is the notion of photography as a blank-page and its close relationship to the work of contemporary photographers which uses computer-based images. They both articulate a different kind of attitude toward the photographic image.

Lorretta Lux executes her compositions using a combination of photography, painting and digital manipulations. She is creating fictional spheres where her hyper-realistic subject-matters articulate a hybrid image which arouses an uncanny feeling of detachment.

The developments and the transform from analogue to digital photography are changing the basic fundamental foundations of the photographic medium. At first it seems as an extension of the old method but once we put aside the mirage of similarity of the final result and look back into the process, it is inevitable to re-examine and think about this new way of image producing.

I would like to start with a short story about a smart notion that was offered to me by Google's spelling checker, which suggested me to fix my false spelling. Once when I wrote that I am photoshoping, Google noted that I am actually photo-hoping; which was true. I was retouching my scans, fixing them till the accurate feeling suddenly appeared. I realized that my analogue image once it has been scanned and turned into a binary numeric representation that can be changed, has a new characteristic. It is as if the gap between photography and painting is getting smaller. In the digital world we are using brushes, stamps, layers. A funny tool name History Brush even has a memory which enable it to recall your last moves and combine between past and present. Maybe the idea of an 'History Brush' somehow contains the transition between the sealed grain and the ever changing pixel. Photography in the digital age changed its face dramatically and combines painting and photographic qualities at the same time on the same new surface which is the 'digital image'.

Definitions are getting looser and might seem irrelevant, still I feel that in order to develop a critical thought toward images it is important to notify to differences.



"Fading Away" 1851,
Henry Peach Robinson

From Form to Contents: Lee Friedlander, and Wolfgang Tillmans

"...To nurture a playability of pseudo-contents as a strategy and at the same time to see in these formalistic ruses the essential meaning... the transience or the mystery of these relations... testify of the appropriation of the photographic act into the private. The result is a refined aesthetics of what were beforehand a public and a teleological movement." (Rosler, 2006)

Martha Rosler tries to set a theoretical foundation for the way that the "modern photographers" work, and especially Lee Friedlander. She notes the importance of the act of appropriation within the photographic act which is testing the borders and capabilities of the medium when the iconography of the seen is being subdued to the wishes of the photographer.

Although the photographs and their subjects seem like a part of a realistic transparent photography, the way Friedlander uses banal components diverges their meaning to someplace else..." (Rosler, 2006)

Friedlander once wrote: "the enjoyment of photographs is just an enjoyment of good photographs regardless the circumstances of their creation" (Rosler, 2006). Out of context this sentence might leave an infantile impression, as one that do not acknowledge photography's role as our story-teller, its social-cultural webs of relations, etc. Friedlander, it seems to me, tries to put the emphasis on the visual appearance factor of the photograph rather than on the information that it encloses.



"Knoxville",
Tennessee 1971
Lee Friedlander,

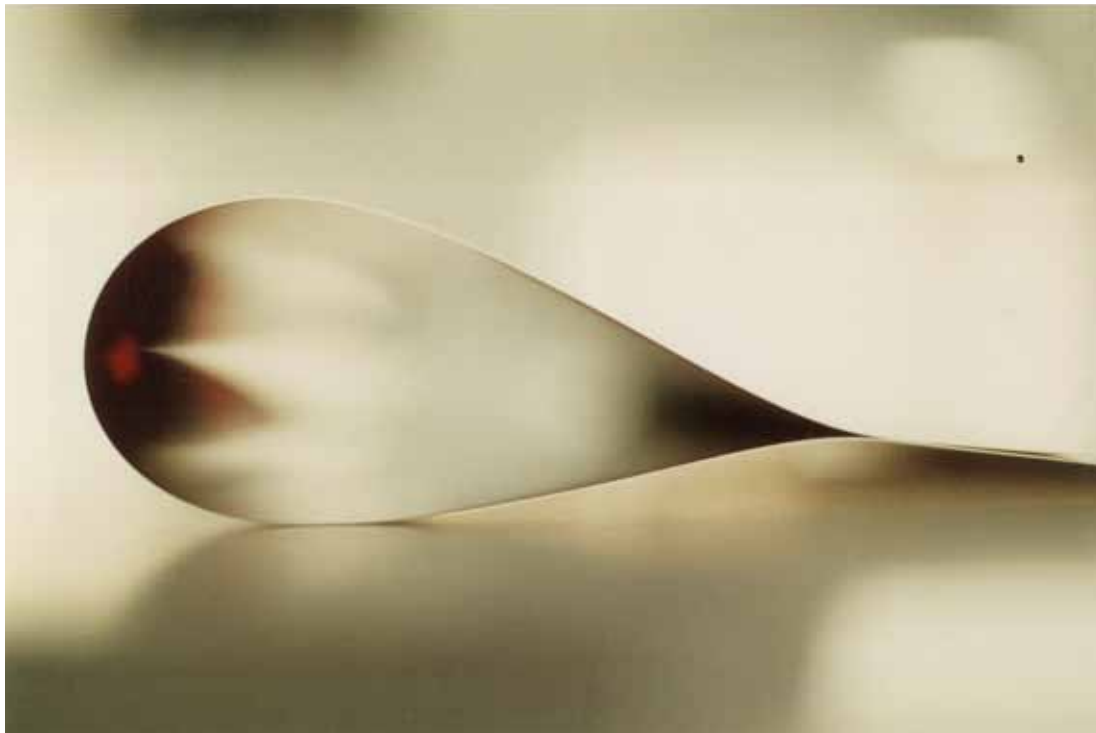
The special importance of the additional, supplemental, information to the photographic reading distinguishes and differentiates the photographic discourse. This is why, even if I was the most gifted painter, and would've painted my photographs, under the signature of my heavy hand it wouldn't have been the same image. Photography is a passive action, "written with light", something else is writing for me; in a way, photography is actually an immense production - cosmic - I contribute my sight and the world as a whole does the rest, and imprints its heavy traces upon my image. This is the complicated relationship between photography and the 'Real'.

Lee Friedlander once said: "I only wanted Uncle Vernon standing by his own car, on a clear day, I got him and the car. I also got a bit of Aunt Mary's laundry and Beau Jack, the dog, and 78 trees and a million pebbles in the driveway and more. It's a generous medium, photography."

Wolfgang Tillmans took the best out of this "generous medium" using its ways of representation to its limits; from what was seen as a cultural documentation of the x generation till abstract photography which offers a linguistic play; in his recent work: "Paper Drop (star)" Tillmans explores form and meanings, he is offering a vast field of meanings in which this image can be interpreted;

from the shape of a 'drop of water' to a more symbolic way of reading where one can see it as a 'tear'; and back again this is just a drop of paper, This work is in a sense a cloud.

I would like to end with the words of Gabriel Orozco: "Reality and realization: the maker (realista) who wishes for the accident. The object that arises in the world as a result of an unpredictable phenomenon and accident, but only when there is an act of consciousness - consciousness that is elicited by the reality of the body ready to receive it. The recipients: the surprise of the maker and the subsequent of the realize: he who activates the reality as a recipient of its future, he who realizes what is happening to him in the world. Acceptance of the real and its accidents. Acceptance of disappointments. Not expecting anything, not being spectator, but realize of accidents, in which reality, when nothing is expected of it, gives us its gifts." (Orozco, 2009)



"Paper Drop" (Star), 2006
Wolfgang Tillmans

“Rue Van Gogh / To Vincent”



Rue Paul Cézanne



Rue Paul Gauguin



Rue Claude Monet



Rue Pierre-Auguste Renoir



To Vincent 01/03



To Vincent 02/03



To Vincent 03/03

Forgetting and Remembering

Remembering and forgetting. Forgetting is somehow related to 'forgiving' and forgiving is connected to 'let it go', which return again back to the act of remembering from the other side, this time, the side that must forget.

We are building our own story, one that we can handle, one that we can (mistakenly) refer to as our private history, the comfort of knowing our past. Actually what one only has is some grasp of knowledge, memory based, or should I say photographic based knowledge. Knowledge which is always too tight to hold, fragmented in its essence, and allows us to create nothing but some mythological sense of ourselves. We build and grow out from the stories that we wisely choose to tell to ourselves.

I just got some bad news from my mother. She told me that one guy who was one year older than I am committed suicide; Jumping from my childhood home building, the place where we both grew up. My family left, his family is still living there.

It made me think about the differences between the two of us, he jump from his home, for me he jumped from some old forgotten building. One that I can hardly remember. He jumped from a concrete building, for me, he jumped from my mythical childhood castle. His suicide for me is somehow a symbolic act, of letting go, or forgiving, or just of going on. Where one is facing his end, one might immediately think about the future, the past, and what is it that lays in-between.

It might seem disconnected and cold, a 29 year old man has just desperately jumped, moving from this world to some big, unknown, nowhere-somewhere vast world of nothingness. About the future we agree; there is nothing but speculations and mythical thinking. About the past, we must ignore the fact that even though we have been there we probably forgot and keep to forgetting. We are lucky that forgetting is forever connected to remembering, we can forget only what we have known, and maybe this is the basic foundations of our self knowing.

It made me think about perspective, about photography, or more precise about photographed memories, which I think, is all that I have: at some point in my life I realized that I remember almost only through photographed episodes. They unfold, and revealing, presenting myself, my sister, my brother, growing up together among some young couple that I learned to recognize as my parents.

These photographs teach me about my personal history, the one that calms me, that makes me feel at home, providing me with some (false) sense of a deep comforting knowledge. Knowledge which always lacks of knowing; False, or misleading, or just forever in-between the truth and the legend.



In memory of vague knowledge

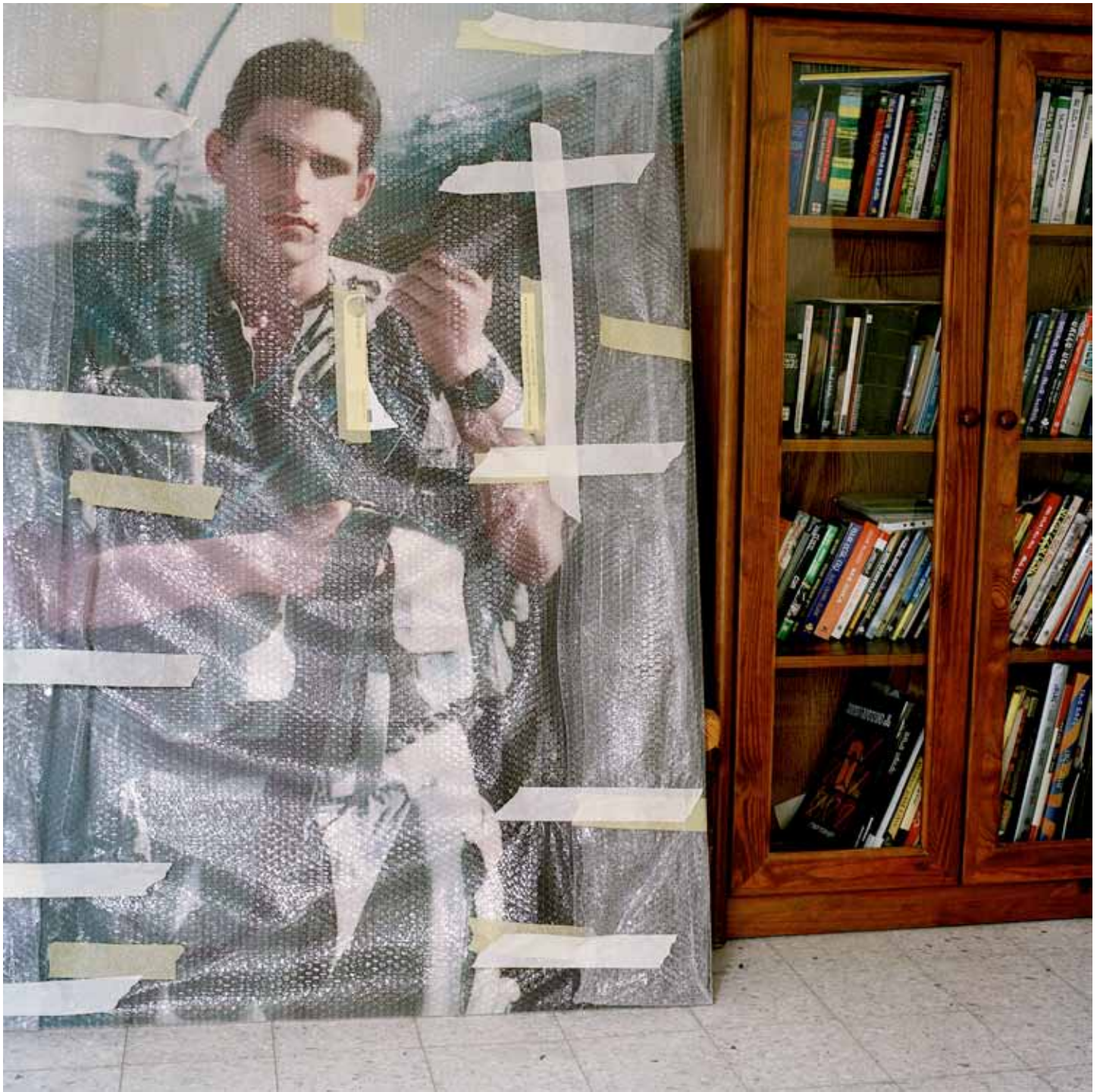
The parts missing from our knowledge, or if you wish the one that we forget, forms our sense of being no less than the things that we do remember. Or in short our knowledge is composed equally by both. Much like the way a melody is composed by its notes and by the breaks of silence between them.

This is the special spectrum or space where the photographic representation is meeting our daily experiences, this is the place where the photographic practice is facing and dealing with fundamental questions and thoughts about our being. It is this harsh contradiction between the analytical and the emotional. Between science and art, between knowing or just to have some strong intuition.

The 73











From Breath To Breath

Gabriel Orozco, was born in Mexico in 1962. He is using all sorts of Medias such as; sculpture, drawing, photography and installations. I first got to know him by his photographic work which seem to me different. It was as if his starting point of view was based on revealing rather than showing. I felt close to him from the first moment, as if I found a friend to play with, a true companion to visual riddles making!

"For me photography is like a shoe box. It is a container I use to transport what I pick up in my interactions ... I am not especially drawn to photographic compositions; the object of my interest is almost always in the middle ground or the totality ... it is a record that focuses on the center of that object. I value the plane of the photograph in its description of that three dimensional and its possible space for storing time. I turn to the photograph as a sculptural space – and at the same time I am drawn to any object that may make an appearance in a photograph" (Orozco, 2009).

Orozco doesn't put his emphasis on the photographic qualities or the photographic language. He sees himself first as a sculptor that uses a camera in order to record and preserve sculptural moments which he finds or creates.

Mia Fineman's beautiful essay about Orozco's work starts with a parable that was written in 1810 by the German dramatist Heinrich Von Kleist about the danger of trying too hard. It tells the story of an "uncommonly graceful young man" which one day went to see "the famous Roman statue of a youth removing a thorn from his foot" made by Spinario. "As the young man was drying himself after swimming, he set down and rested his foot on a stool. Catching a glimpse of himself in the mirror, he was immediately reminded of the statue. The narrator noticed the resemblance but decided to challenge the boy's vanity, saying that the boy was seeing ghosts. The young man blushed and lifted his foot a second time to demonstrate, but failed to produce the same effect. He lifted his foot again and again but in vain; he was utterly incapable of reproducing his original gesture... From that day an inconceivable transformation began in that young man. He would stand whole days before the mirror; one charm after another fell from him. An invisible and incomprehensible force, like an iron net, seemed to spread over the free play of his gestures and when one year had passed not a trace could be detected of that sweetness which had once so delighted the sight of all who surrounded him" (Fineman, 2004).

Fineman reads this parable as the story of the problematic effect of self awareness, of the wish to resemble (to look like or to be like) she points out that this might be the cause for agony, for any artist, she continues; "because of this the world is crowded with "painterly" paintings and "writerly" prose and "architectural" architecture – art that spends a little too much time in front of the mirror, admiring its own artistry." (Ibid p.15)

This story offers a contemplation about the paradoxical human condition of self-awareness which as Kleist puts it creates a world: "which is forever bound to know too much and not enough"... "the fall from heaven into self awareness was not an event in the biblical past, but something that is happening all the time". (Ibid p.16)

This manifesto, as Mia suggested, is about the possibility to think of a world that knows less of himself and goes back into an imaginary world of pre-self-awareness; a world that creates without trying too hard.

Gabriel Orozco does not see himself as a photographer. He does not articulate his photograph in relation to the history and convention of this medium. His practice spills over the traditional boundaries between sculpture, drawing, photography, installation and video. He creates with "reality"; He approaches photography as a mean of interacting with his immediate environment – as part of an active physical and intellectual engagement with the world.

I would like to put my emphasis on Orozco as a photographer especially since I feel that his work contains what I mainly appreciate in photographs; The act of displacement which recreate meaning out of the daily experience using imagination and putting an emphasis on paying attention.

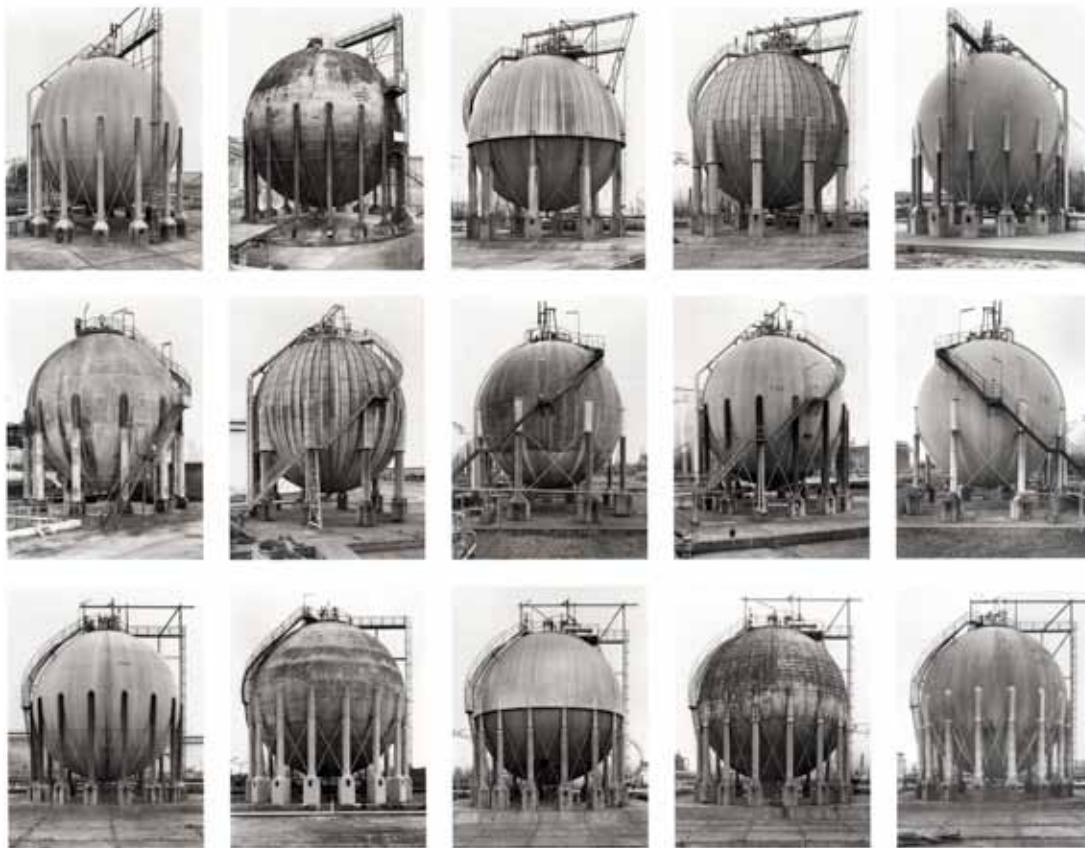
In a photographic perspective he might be in a formalistic manner connected to the German school of objectivity and typology, which wished to explore the visibility of things 'out there' as they are, and contemplate through them on history, human activity and other social points of view. They wished to create a visual essay which uses the language of repetition and serial work in order to make a visual sense.

Orozco at first glance cannot be more far from this. His work is based on a personal point of view, on fragment notes rather than on the logic of series process, through photography he articulates the things that only Orozco saw in a particular object. There is no objective existence to his objects. (His viewing objects are temporal and private).

The photographic gesture is still quite similar. They both use the camera in the same manner of grasping the outline characteristic of their objects accurately and without interfering in the sense of technical manipulations such as depth of field and complicated composition. They both believe in the object ability to create itself as an image rather than creating an image out of the object. In that sense they both try to be as objective as possible when approaching an object and "let it speak" for itself.

While their motivations, logic and reason are far from being similar, yet I wish to keep this claim here with us just to contemplate for a brief moment on the importance of the photographic surface and gesture in Orozco's photo-sculpture-work.

In the Becher's work "the water towers" they photographed for many years the soon to be vanished structures of industrial buildings over the industrial progression in Germany of the 20th century, putting the emphasis on the formalistic qualities that somehow hardly echoes the functionality and usage of those objects by visually representing them like an ancient structure that might resonate a structure of an old vanished dinosaur. They managed unintentionally, I think, to create a multi-visual expression that goes beyond the visible and contains subconscious visual knowledge. I like formalistic games that take one thing and by a simple act of isolation or by a clever editing process create a new sentence that contains both the object and its optional hidden meanings.



"Gastanks" 1983-1992
bernd and hilla becher

Orozco in his sculptural work mainly deals with the concept of Form and Content, Form and Functionality. As with his great football sculpture, Orozco created an object that resonates the functionality and movement of a moving football in a still, long and huge football-like sculpture. It is a clever act which takes a common object and manages to re-create it in a playful and meaningful manner.

This sculpture, for me, is like a low speed HD photograph of a rolling ball. I think that in the same way one can grasp a sculptural feeling in his photographs, here one can sense its photographic origins in this sculpture.

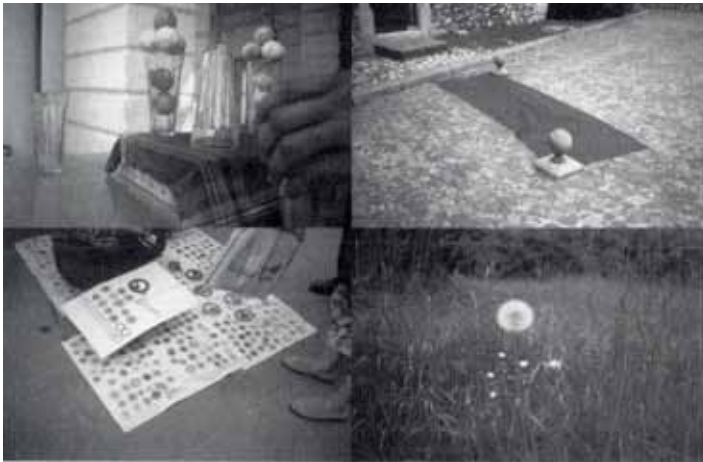


"Football", 2003
180x27x27 cm
Gabriel Orozco

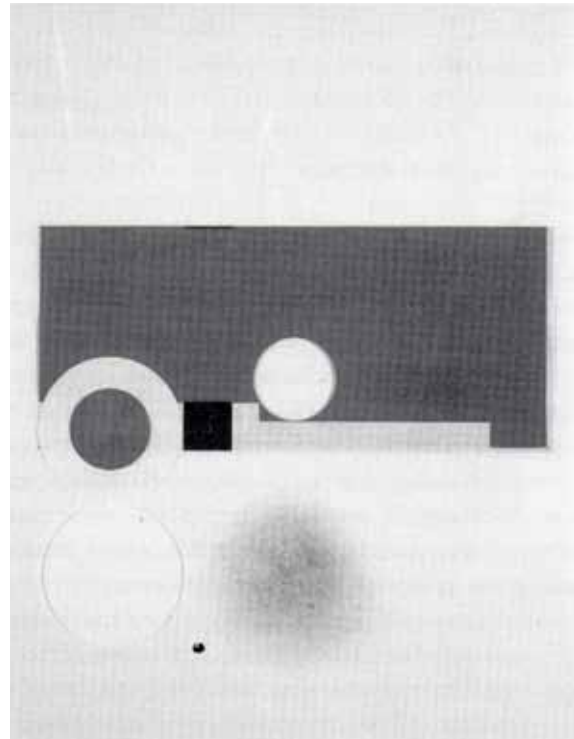
Orozco's visual logic can be read as a logic that builds itself out of shapes. The shape of a circle consistently appears in many of his different works in which in a circulated way constructs their meaning upon each other; "it is impossible to think on his works as singles- one immediately gives way to another" (Orozco, 2009)

I wish to suggest, at this point, that Orozco does work in a typological way. His logic goes through shapes rather than on sociological similarities or functions. His study of the world relies on subliminal symbolic notions that reveal themselves in different ways of expression but yet motives-wise, connected to the same story.

One work that somehow underline this circularity of circles is the "Discos Dados, 1997"; It is a work constructed by four images of different usage and creation of circles. At first it might seem as a weird visual game which aims nothing but to put an emphasis on a shape. I feel that this work wish to point out the process; To summarize a basic way of being and of creating in Orozco's world. Orozco always sees some hidden link between the visible and its echoes. Another work that comes across here is "Red Air, 1997" which examine abstract structures of circles, again here are four different ways of representing a circle, which this time can be interpreted as the structure of a key or as a 'key structure'. One particular circle in this image immediately reminded me of a totally different work "Breath on Piano" which echoed through the vanishing outline of that particular circle.



"Discos Dados", 1997
Gabriel Orozco



"Red Air", 1997
Gabriel Orozco

In "Breath on Piano" Orozco painted with his breath on top of a piano leaving temporal trace and recorded it for eternal existence or like he once said "To make 'Breath on Piano' took a few seconds; the photograph may last for a hundred years" (Ibid p.100)

This notion somehow contains the importance of this image; in a small, simple gesture, he articulates the past (the action) and creates the past-present-future gesture of forever Breath-trace. He pays a meticulous attention to what he calls the 'liquidity of things'. By the poetic and almost invisible act of "breath on piano" he is suggesting a different rhythm of being.



"Breath on Piano"
1993
Gabriel Orozco

After I started to think deeply of Orozco's importance to my work I recalled an image that was part of my "In Memory of "series. It was "In Memory of a Breath ", in this image I took a dead bird and a dead lizard and recreate by chance the traces of a final breath and interaction. It is a fake scène that imitated movement and a false drama, fabricating a tale, or just creating one.

Titles are an important tool in Orozco's practice. I feel that here again there is an interesting connection between the two of us as our titles tells a third story rather than pointing out what is seen. We both mainly indicate on what was our private interest and notions in the photographic scene.



In memory of a breath

In his work; "Extension of Reflection" we meet again with a temporal trace that was created by Orozco himself in a playful manner, which created a multi-layered third story with a metaphysical glimpse that shine toward abstract thinking. He himself said about this image that his interest was actually literal. He was amused by the way that the reflection of the trees became extended by his act of paddling in circles (again circles) between two puddles;



"Extension of Reflection"
1992
Gabriel Orozco

"I was in the East River park with my camera and it had just rained and the light was beautiful and it was full of reflections... then there were all these cycling guys going really fast and I was there with my 100\$ bicycle, and they were fast and avoiding all the puddles. They are accidents; it is the residue of something... What I did was just to cross them instead of avoiding them, I made a personal situation absurd, connected it to the puddle. And it is an extension of the reflection because you see the reflection of the branches in the water and the extension of the lines. It was a very basic thing, very stupid. I didn't plan it at all.¹

¹ "" (From Robert Storr's interview with Gabriel Orozco, "Gabriel Orozco: The Power to Transform," Art Press 225 (June 1997), pp.25-26) See; Orozco (2009)

The title here when seen in a straight relation to the image made me think about the act of thinking, reflecting, and going in circles, never reaching a final spot, forever ridding through two puddles; this was my symbolic interpretation that has nothing to do with Orozco literal act, that is the beauty in Orozco titles, they open the story rather than sum-it-up or defining a situation, they recreate and re-articulate a given moment, and by doing that becoming an inseparable part of the whole picture.

In Orozco works knowledge does not become meaningless but still it is not fixed; it shifts. It becomes just a window through which we see something else. Sight is a pile of examples turning into other examples.

In his work "Common Dream" Orozco photographed a huddle of sheep somewhere in the middle of a dusty empty field. They are white and fluffy; standing at the same spot, perhaps enjoying the last piece of grass remained on this field. It is midday according to the harsh light, the sky is blue and the colors are bright; this is the information that a common observer could grasp. This was a literal description of the scene. In Orozco's mind it turns into a myth resonating the symbolic being of sheep; reminding the viewer of the relaxing ritual of counting sheep when it's hard to fall asleep. There is something poetically human in this notion, Common Dream. It makes me think about the moment before I fall asleep and the magical use of this caption, connect me immediately to an every person private moment of falling asleep, that we all share as humans.



"Common Dream"
1996
Gabriel Orozco

I wonder why I am so fascinated by this connection between two ways of visual thinking. Maybe it has something to do with the fact that my photographic reasoning many times goes between the rational of painting versus photo, versus sculpture, and uses Form as a starting point from which the meaning arise. Yet it is many times the meaning that reveals the form.

How things circulate themselves in our world? One thing leads to the other linking itself to an idea and create a fourth and fifth meaning. This is a method of thinking. This is the process of thinking. Thesis and antithesis create synthesis or in the way the French structuralist Claude Levi-Strauss puts it “ It is not the resemblances but the differences, which resemble each other”² and create a meaning.



"Dog Circle"
1995
Gabriel Orozco

² Claude Levi-Strauss, Totemism, Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1969, p.77. see at Orozco. (2009)

In Orozco's world one circle leads to the other, extending the other. Photography for Orozco is a way to point-out. He is using the camera as a form of visual-note-making. His way of using photography has changed around 1990. When instead of only document his interventions he started to find a new use of the photographic surface and meanings. He started to photograph situations and object as they were found; "The act of taking the photograph not only as records but as constitutes of his encounter with the real" (Ibid p.18)

Mia Fineman noted that: "At times, it seems that he is simply adding punctuation to the prose of the everyday" (Fineman, 2004) About the poetical aspects in his work Orozco said: "I think that the poetic happens, it happens because of the spectator ... it is an act , an act of belief or an act of illusion on the part of the spectator" (Ibid p.22)

It is resonating the word of Jorge Luis Borges, a writer that has a great influence on Orozco's way of thinking: "the fact is that poetry is not in the books in the library... poetry is the encounter of the reader with the book, the discovery of the book" (Ibid p.22)

Orozco does not work in a studio, he works out-there in the realm of the everyday. His subject-matters includes: puddles, clothes, lines, cars and bicycles, empty chairs and tables, containers and vessels, dogs, kites, trees, fruit, shows, stray trash, marbles etc... (Ibid p.17). Many of the encounters are the result of chance, or luck: "We normally consider stability to be the constant in life and accident to be the exception but it's exactly the opposite. In reality, the accident is the rule and stability is the exception". The main question according to Orozco is how to communicate these accidents? (Ibid p.23)³

In Buddhism there is a concept of 'satori'; a sudden illuminates changes in perspective. The most common method to provoke 'satori' is the 'koan'; a question whose answer does not correspond to the rules of logic. In a lecture that was given by Borges he said: "The Classic example has been attributed to several masters. One of them was asked: 'What is the Buddha?' He replied: 'Three pounds of linen.' Commentators note that the answer is not symbolic."

Fineman ending her beautiful essay by saying: "Like visual Koans- or like jokes, or poems... Orozco's photographs play with the rules of logic to encourage way of seeing that circumvents the habits of thought that ordinarily structure our experience. They are documents of intense visual attentiveness that also encourage an attitude of heightened awareness in the viewer." (Ibid p.24)

3 A conversation with Mia Fineman, New York City, March 15, 2004

I would like to end with a rectangle. In his photo-sculpture intervention “An Island within an Island (1993)”, Orozco photographed one of his interventions. He built the lower Manhattan skyline out of debris, and took the picture when the represented skyline is looming in the background. This is the World Trade Center who stands tall in the background. This information adds to the picture and to Orozco’s gesture an extra meaning, and suddenly his intervention communicates an act that can be seen as memorialization and even visually speaks the language of a monument.



"An Island
within an Island"
1993
Gabriel Orozco

Here once again he is using the 'shape resonating technique'; using the structural act of representation by both articulating an object and at the same time disobey its rules; by photographing this intervention he creates a third surface which contains the sign (the buildings), its signifier (the sculptural replica) and the gap between the two becomes the eternal photographic representation. Or in other simple words: an image.



"Seeds and
Cardboard"
1993
Gabriel Orozco

'Patarei Prison', Estonia.







It's time to make some conclusions.

In this chapter we will make a dialogue between my world views as a photographer and the issues that I pointed out during this work.

My starting-point was to emphasis and to make the connection between 'Attention' and the photographic practice. I noted and demonstrated the importance of 'Attention' in the creation of the cognitive process of comprehending the world. Later on I started to use terms that has an influence on our capability of attentiveness such as; perception, distraction, surprise, and about the nature of 'will'; about intentionality.

The problem of 'Intentionality' was at the core interest of the first photographers. Their main concern was to define the new qualities of this new technologic tool which creates images through a process that has an automatic nature.

In the second chapter "Realizing Realism" I expanded my research toward different kinds of photographic practices that raised and handled the problem of intentionality. They examined the relationship between the photographic image and the 'Real'. As I see it, from the very beginning, photographers were involved in comprehending this complicated relation; it started with the literal act of 'Pictorialism', which strengthened the transition from the hand-craft art to the eye-craft art which became the main interest and the sphere for investigation of the straightforward- photographic movement.

From that point I started to make notions about the nature of the photographic image through the work of different photographers ; Alfred Stieglitz, Vik Muniz, William Eggelston, Jeff Wall, Gerhard Richter, Loreate Lux, Henry Peach Robinson, Lee Friedlander and Wolfgang Tillmans. I used their practices to point-out different ways of expression and analytical processes which formed the state of contemporary photography.

Trough a short-notion about memory and forgetfulness I wished to emphasis again the vague nature of human perception and to think about the place of the photographic image in our day-to-day struggle to comprehend our world.

In the Third Chapter "From Breath to Breath" I offered a deep insight into the work of Gabriel Orozco. Gabriel Orozco is an interdisciplinary artist which uses photography as a way to point out and share his experiences in the day-to-day life, which is close to my photographic point of view and interest. His relation towards reality and the role of the photographic image as he sees it can be demonstrated through the words of Kurt Vonnegut from the story 'Cat's Cradle':

"Why should I bother with made-up games when there are so many real ones going on?"

A friend once told me that my photographic practice is different from Orozco's practice, since the way that we use photography and our way of photographic articulation are different. Orozco uses a point-and-shot camera. I use a large format camera. My prints are large and sharp; emphasizing the ability of the photographic image to represent reality in a coherent sharp and clear way, which is different from human eyesight. Orozco prints his images always at the same size; 16x20 inch, not too big and not too small, this is a size that keeps the informative essence of the photograph clear but do not wish to create, what Jeff Wall defined as a photographic tableau.

I answered that our motivation and the way that we grasps the importance of the photographic image are similar. Orozco once said that: ". . . What is important is not so much what people see in the gallery or the museum, but what people see after looking at these things, how they confront reality again. Really great art regenerates the perception of reality; the reality becomes richer, better or not, just different." (Fineman, 2004).

In my photographic practice I wish to uncover inherited story-tales, which are taking place in our daily environments. I'm making notions and remarks, using daily appearances as my main material. I wish to share my thoughts and feelings about our day-to-day being; My subject-matters goes from inner artistic notions such as the act of representation, imagination and paying-attention, to a more general metaphysical notions about being alive. I am interested in the way that society is using symbols and icons; private and public icons. In the pictures that I'm creating, I'm mainly fascinated by the mythological character of our daily existence. Hoping to unfold this mythological existence, I use a kind of a sweet-sorrow black humor and a camera.

In my project "In memory of", 2008-2009, I decided to unfold my visual practice, out of doubt and confusion that I had toward the role of the photographic image and its ability to communicate a coherent thought. I decided to map my sight, and to point out the meanings and the thoughts that I deal with in my pictures. I wanted to question the power of photography; and doubt the conventions of reading an image. By the usage of titles I wished to create a different platform for communication between the image and the observer. This work won the Epson-Levallois prize and was exhibited in Paris. It was my first solo exhibition. The project contains 50 images in varied sizes.

The 73 project tells the story of a Helicopters disaster that took place in 1997 when two helicopters accidentally air crush into each other and fell down in the north of Israel, There were no survivors, 73 soldiers have died. 73 families found themselves suddenly connected under the horrifying community of grief and sorrow. They all lost their child at the same brief moment, at the same place, under the same vaguely circumstances; they all share one wish-to-be-forgotten moment. Every week I was facing the traces of a different slain person- big lost and lack of sense. I wanted to reveal day-to-day reality that is not discussed and that is refused to be 'look at'.

My photographic approach was distance, I collected information from the space that remain, been re-design and contains traces of memory, I found an interest in the photographic representations of the family's history, the images that they choose and the visual subtext that arises. I photographed what remained and at the same time captured what no longer exists. My photographs are silent, quite, sterile, cold, I am not showing real tears, I'm photographing the unspeakable sorrow, I'm capturing hectically numbed spaces, dry tears marks. Tear-stained walls. 70 image. (This project was published as a web-site: www.the73.org)

My work contains contemplations about the nature and the usage of images in our culture. My project "To Vincent" deals with the question towards cultural memory and artistic effort. How does our cultural memory is constructed? What are the usages of our pictorial memory? I wished to tell again the story of Vincent Van Gogh which is raising the subject of artistic effort, and the process of creation. This project was taken in the streets of Niort, in France, a place which I did a residency in. While I was wondering around the streets of Niort I found the painters' district, Gauguin Street, Cézanne Street, Lautrec street etc'. I was standing in an everyday common neighborhood, surrounded by white houses, flowers, fences and cars, regular inventory list of our day-to-day in-use objects. I decided to follow the painters' path, keeping in mind some great masterpieces that were made in order to spread some color among us. At some point I've noticed that someone is missing. I couldn't find the Van Gogh Street. I started seeing his traces at every corner. Remembering his artistic struggle to get acknowledgement; I realized that once again he was left out; I decided to dedicate my work to him.

Another work "The Man Who Wished To Be" is about the story of a man who is an amateur painter who in his free time creates only paintings that resemble the 'action-painting' of Jackson Pollock. I found him in some country-side house in France and felt that we are sharing some common interest.

From that point onward my photographic practice changed and started to be more fragmented, my projects became smaller and work more like sentences which creates prose than like a novel. I work in triptychs and in single images rather than in a long series. All those 'Small projects' connected under the same title of: "Geometrical Tales".

I tell the story of "The Fish, The Peacock, and The Sad Man", a triptych that wish to share one visual conclusion from one photo-session, which raise some basic questions about imagination, Form and Content and the nature of portraiture. I also tell the story of "The Room of the Dead-Cat", which I photographed in a friend's house, and combines between the literal story about a room that used to be the room where the old cat was kept in. The poetic action of the mother who posed literature sequences around the house. The sequence that found his place in this forgotten room, which is no longer in use, tells the story of 29 year old woman that decided to commit suicide.

Another Triptych "Formalistic Game" was taken in a prison in Estonia which is no longer in use. I spent almost two months there; I lived in the court-yard of the prison, going every day inside the prison to photograph. I was confused and exhausted; I didn't know what I am searching for. The strong presence of the prison forced me to decide if I wish to tell the story of the prison; to create a documentation of this horrible place, which used to be a site for abuse and murder (under the vague rules system of the Russian authorities). I was there but as soon that I opened up my camera I was somewhere else, I was playing the whole time: with formalistic forms and with abstracted figures, playing with composition, with light, and do not photograph the place itself. The only thing that did resonate the fact that this is a prison was my special interest in the prisoners' free-time habits which included the redecoration of their cell. They used photographic images not only porn but also representations of life-styles; washing machines, cars, foot-ball players, animals, etc'. This triptych summarizes my experience and might become in the future part of a bigger series that will tell my story from the prison. Another work from this prison is "Much Ado About Nothing" which tell the story of compositional effort to build an image that will tell the story, or the non-story of a nail.

I would like to finish with another work "The Stones Revolution" which tells the story of a pile of small stones in a constructing site that was due to become a building. They didn't know how to escape and how to break-through the wooden cage. Till one day they realized that only if they will join together and become a rock they might succeed.

This story took place in Helsinki just in front of my window.



The Stones Revolution

The Man Who Wish To Be









39339 / 999 / 27 / 9

The Fish, The Peacock and The Sad Man



The Peacock



The Sad Man



The Fish



In memory of the hidden cat

'Patarei Prison', Estonia



Much Ado About Nothing



The Room of the Dead Cat



The Cost of Fame, 2010

In memory of a few silent moments with my father, 2008

In memory of vague knowledge, 2009

In memory of small drama with a dog and a cat, 2007

In memory of being abused, 2009

In memory of natural resistance No.1, 2009

In memory of perspective, 2009

In memory of my house prototype obsession. 2008

In memory of just being, 2008

In memory of bad visual articulation, 2009

Rue Paul Cézanne, 2009

Rue Paul Gauguin, 2009

Rue Claude Monet, 2009

Rue Pierre-Auguste Renoir, 2009

To Vincent 01/03 ,2009

To Vincent 02/03 ,2009

To Vincent 03/03 2009

In Memory of a House

“The 73 ”

In memory of a breath, 2009

Formalistic-games 01/03 2012

Formalistic-games 02/03 2012

Formalistic-games 03/03 2012

“The Stones Revolution”, 2011

“The Man Who Wish To Be”, 2011

“39339 / 999 / 27 / 9”, 2012

“The Fish, The Peacock and The Sad Man”
2010

“In memory of the hidden cat”, 2008. From
“In Memory Of”

“Much Ado About Nothing”, 2012, From
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But there is one painting Olivia just doesn't get.
"I could do that in about five minutes,"
she says to her mother.